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# SACRED JOURNEY



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THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER ~ OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2008

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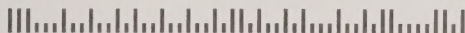
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# C O N T E N T S

Vol. 59, No. 5, October/November 2008

<i>A Message From Fellowship in Prayer</i> From Tolerance to Respect <i>Janet M. Haag</i>	2
<i>An Interfaith Dialogue</i> The Artistic Expression of Prayer <i>Robert Freedman, Charles McCollough, Ferhan Tunagur</i>	4
<i>Prayers</i>	18
The Healing Touch of Tibetan Art	22
<i>Illuminations</i>	26
Creating Art as an Act of Prayer <i>Erika Hastings</i>	28
<i>Spiritual Practice</i> Chanting Om	32
Praying Each Day <i>Michael Sullivan</i>	34
Silence Within <i>Pamela Poe</i>	37
<i>A Reflection</i> God's Musical Instruments <i>Colette Hanlon</i>	40
Joy in the Dance <i>June Keener Wink</i>	42
<i>Poetry</i>	45
<i>Endpiece</i>	48

Cover: *Tilted Vessel* © deAnn Roe.

*Prayer enables us to be open to the Spirit, tilted just enough to spill into others what is poured into us.*

## From Tolerance to Respect

Janet M. Haag



If you watched any of the 2008 Olympic Games, you may have seen the “Go World” Visa sponsorship ads and heard the words, “There are six billion of us. We all come from unique places with unique ways of looking at the world. We don’t always agree but for a few shining weeks we set it all aside. We come together to stand and cheer and celebrate as one. We forget all the things that make us different—and remember all the things that make us the same.”

This message certainly touches a chord in our common humanity. It paints with a broad stroke an ideal world in which we all get along. The words uplift, inspire, motivate . . . and acknowledge from the outset that unity founded in sameness is fleeting. Our uniqueness, the things that make us different remain, and therefore the potential for conflict always looms large.

I recently had the opportunity to meet with Rajiv Malhotra, a Hindu writer, community leader and philanthropist. In the course of our conversation about effective interfaith dialogue, he astutely pointed out that we fall short in our efforts to promote true peace and understanding in this world when we settle for tolerance instead of making the paradigm shift to mutual respect.

*Janet M. Haag is Managing Director of Fellowship in Prayer.*

His remarks prompted me to think a little more deeply about the distinction between the words "tolerance and respect," and the values they represent.

The word tolerance comes from the Latin verb, *tolerare*, which is translated "to bear, endure, tolerate." While the concept of endurance itself is laudable, the idea that one individual or group must simply endure the presence of another does not convey a spirit of mutual affirmation or support. It also implicitly suggests an imbalance of power in the relationship, with one of the parties in a position of giving or withholding permission for the other to be. Malhotra asked, "How would you feel if you were invited to dinner and your host or hostess indicates they are happy to tolerate your presence at table? Or how would you feel if your spouse or child or someone you love professes they tolerate you?"

The word respect, on the other hand, comes from the Latin, *respicere*, meaning "to look back at, to consider again and to treat with deferential regard or esteem." Respect presupposes we are equally worthy of honor. There is no room for arrogance and exclusivity in the same space as mutual respect. It requires setting aside any notion of being "one, true or only." From a religious perspective, it requires a humble and heartfelt acknowledgment of the validity of "many spiritual paths." Malhotra indicated that Hinduism has respectfully embraced other religions and cultures for centuries.

In this issue of SACRED JOURNEY, you will have the opportunity to consider some artistic expressions of prayer from various traditions. Perhaps as you read these words or view the artwork, you will be tempted "to stand, cheer and celebrate" some of the very things that make us different!

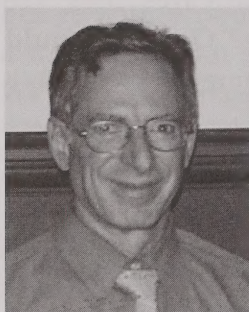


# An Interfaith Dialogue



*At an Interfaith Dialogue Luncheon co-sponsored by Fellowship in Prayer and the Interfaith Dialog Center of New Jersey, representatives from each of the Abrahamic traditions explored "The Artistic Expression of Prayer."*

## THE ARTISTIC EXPRESSION OF PRAYER ... IN JUDAISM



**Rabbi Robert Freedman:** If I were to invite you to join me in a *niggun*, you would probably be puzzled, wondering, "What is a *niggun*?" Quite simply, a *niggun* is a melody without words, created by making different sounds against an easily remembered and repeated series of musical notes.

*Nigguns* can be used to generate different feelings and sensations. A good friend, Rabbi Miles Krassen once taught me a *niggun* for raising energy—always a good one to use when speaking to a group after lunch!

I think we would all agree, whatever our religious tradition, that music is very powerful. For instance, if I hum a tune with which you are familiar, like the Christian

*Rabbi and Cantor Robert Freedman began singing in a synagogue when he was thirteen years old. He earned a Bachelor of Music degree at the University of North Carolina and a Masters degree in vocal performance at the Eastern School in Rochester, NY. He received rabbinic ordination from the Academy of Jewish Religion. Rabbi Freedman currently lives with his wife Sally in Princeton, NJ.*



hymn, *We Gather Together*, and I ask you what image comes to mind, you might respond, "New England in autumn." You might visualize Pilgrims and Indians, turkey and stuffing, your family gathered around the table for a plentiful Thanksgiving feast. If I ask what feelings this tune evokes, you might say love, comfort or thankfulness. In terms of your relationship with God, you may say this hymn reminds you of how blessed you are. By the same token, if I sing even the first few words from *Silent Night*, you are instantly transported to a different time of year and a different place. Feelings of reverence and awe are likely to surface and a certain peacefulness prevails. If you are Protestant and I sing the *Doxology* (from the Greek *doxa* meaning glory and *logos* meaning word), you would probably be reminded of the point in the Sunday morning worship service when the offering is received.

A traditional closing hymn for a Jewish service begins with the words, *Adon 'olam 'asher malakh b'terem kol y'tsir nivra*, translated, "The Lord of the Universe reigned before anything was created." The tune to which these words are sung can be changed, depending on the time of year. In midwinter, I often use the tune *Winter Wonderland*. On a mid-summer day, the melody of *Summertime* (from *Porgy and Bess*) is a good choice.

Through these examples we see the awesome power of music, its ability to take us from a present state of mind and deliver us to a different place, one that draws on our emotions and thoughts and evokes physical sensations through memories and imagination. Music is an extraordinarily powerful religious tool for deepening prayer.

The Latin root of the word, "religion" is *religare* which means "to bind." To what are we seeking to bind ourselves

through our religious beliefs and practices? Clifford Geertz, addressing his students at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton said that institutionalized religion begins with experience, an experience of unity with the Divine that defies description. This moment of apprehension, of closeness to the Divine is so precious that we want to remember it. In fact, we feel compelled to remember it. So we create a metaphor. In order to remember the metaphor, we create a ritual. In our prayer rituals, music has the power to evoke the feelings, thoughts and memories that call us to bind ourselves again and again to wholeness and holiness.

In the Jewish tradition, we believe music affects us on four different levels. We have the level of the physical—the breath, the articulation that comes from our lips, teeth and tongue as they form the words and the sound that comes out of our mouths. Surrounding the physical level and carried by it is the level of emotion—love, compassion, praise, yearning, gratitude, that connect our souls to those of others. A third level is the level of the intellect—cognition, reason and deduction. It is on this level that we compose the music that conveys our emotions. The final level is unity—being close to the Divine. Sometimes, when we sing with others, we can enter briefly into a realm of unity as our voices lift us together.

Music's power to move us in the four worlds is in some ways more powerful than that of the static arts, painting and sculpture. Music is kinetic and participatory. It engages our breath, our lungs, lips and tongues as well as our hearts and minds.

To illustrate the power of music in prayer, I'd like to lead you on a quick tour through the Jewish Liturgical

year, highlighting the role of music. Our journey's guide is going to be a prayer called *Kaddish*, a proclamation of God's holiness. In the Jewish liturgy it is used to transition between succeeding sections as the sequence of prayers takes us through realms of heart, mind and unity. Depending on the place in the service, on the time of day and the season of the year, the melodies for singing the *Kaddish* change. Thus, a regular attendee, hearing the *Kaddish* sung to a particular tune, will instantly be confirmed and reinforced as to its place in the liturgy, the time, and the season. This is similar to the Catholic church's use of various chant modes to reflect the time of day and season.

Imagine it is 6:30 in the morning and a workman is saying the morning prayers before going off to his labor. His morning *Kaddish* is a soft, simple, quick tune. There is nothing fancy. He is intent on saying the prayer and beginning his labor. In fact, this prayer is part of his work for the day. All of his work is done in service of God so this prayer simply starts off his day. A little later in the day he will say a short afternoon prayer. The melody for its *Kaddish* is slightly different, conveying more expansiveness. He needs a longer break by the time two o'clock rolls around. *Kaddish* for the evening prayer of the Sabbath is longer still and sung to a popular melody that all Jews know and to which they will all sing along. This communal spirit is very important because if one person does not feel like singing, if he or she does not feel their heart can be lifted

Music draws  
on our  
emotions  
and thoughts  
and evokes  
physical  
sensations  
through  
memory and  
imagination.



up, then the singing of the person next to them will do this for them. They will lift both of their voices and hearts to God. I recall reading somewhere once that only two living species do things in unison. One is a type of firefly that lives in the Philippines; all in the same tree light up at the same time. The other species is people. The slower pace of Sabbath evening prayer signifies that we have made it through another week and it is time to pause and take a break. The melody is easy, scale up and scale down. Toward the end of the morning service on the Sabbath, the music is majestic, communicating the culmination of the prayer. The *Kaddish* melody for Sabbath afternoon reflects its character as a time of rest, touched with sadness because our tradition tells us Moses died on the afternoon of the Sabbath. Perhaps, we are also sad that we will have to go back to work the next day!

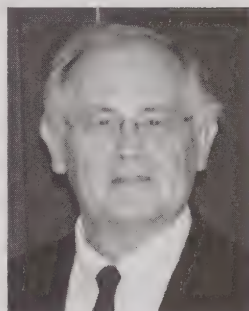
Songs during the High Holy Days like Rosh Hashanah proclaim the kingship and grandeur of God with tunes that are majestic and exalted. The music for the concluding service of Yom Kippur offers a sharp contrast. After almost twenty-five hours of fasting and constant prayer, we feel weary; the melody used then for *Kaddish* expresses our fatigue as well as our yearning for forgiveness. It also reflects our knowledge that soon the Gates of Repentance will symbolically close and we long to emerge forgiven and renewed.

Even if you are unfamiliar with all these Jewish melodies, perhaps you have a new understanding and appreciation for the way in which music can carry the words of prayer, expanding their meaning well beyond the confines of the words themselves.

## . . . IN CHRISTIANITY

Reverend Charles McCollough:

The three faiths from the Abrahamic tradition share a commitment to the centrality of both private and public prayer as daily practice. Similarly, Judaism, Islam and Protestant Christianity have shared a suspicion of the visual arts, at least the representations of God's creatures and, of course, of God. There are exceptions but the fear of idolatry has generally ruled in these traditions. I can only speak as a Protestant Christian and one from the Calvinist Reformed branch, which is the most iconophobic. As an artist, this reality has been a bit uncomfortable at times. The main reason for suspicion of images is, of course, the second commandment: "You shall not make for yourself a graven image." (Ex.20:4, Lev. 19:4, Deut. 4:16, 5:8, RSV) Its message seems pretty clear. For those of us who try to observe the commandments, it seems to rule out the making of images. But is this commandment really so absolute?



If we affirm this prohibition against making images, we have to deal with the contrary command of God in Exodus 31:1-5 and 35:30-33 given through Moses to a gifted craftsman, Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah who was "filled with the spirit of God . . . to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver and

*The Reverend Dr. Charles McCollough is an artist, author, professor, minister and an advocate for the environment, peace and social justice. He obtained his Ph.D. from Drew University and has served as a United Church of Christ pastor.*

bronze and the cutting of stones for setting and the carving of wood . . .” for the sanctuary, the tent of meeting. These two biblical references to the creation of art for religious purposes are identical, one placed before and one after the idolatry of the golden calf episode. Because I sometimes do not get paid for my works of art, here is the part I like best, “The people kept bringing Bezalel free will offerings, more than enough . . . . So the people were restrained from bringing, for what they had was sufficient.” (Ex. 36:5-7). There follows a long list of objects that God commands to be made of acacia wood and gold including images of cherubim for the Ark of the Covenant and fine linen curtains and vestments. The strict prohibition against graven images is again challenged in Numbers 21:8 when the Lord orders Moses to make “a serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” Moses obeys God with an image of a serpent made in bronze.

We have a clear conflict: Is the creation of visual art forbidden or is it not? I personally experienced this conflict long ago when I was teaching confirmation classes in my church. On Sunday morning I would teach teens the Ten Commandments, including the command not to make graven images. Then on Sunday evening I would go into the parsonage garage and make for myself graven images.

However, all of this conflict changed in 1990 with the New Revised Standard translation of the Bible. The critical distinction for religious artists centered on one word. Instead of prohibiting the making of images in the second commandment, the text reads, “you shall not make for yourself an idol.” There is no longer a general prohibition against making images of any kind. After



centuries of condemnation of image-making, it is finally okay to do so. At last, I was free to make images, or rather, I was free from the guilt of making them.

Artistic images are related to prayer in two ways: the experience of creating art and the experience of viewing art. In the making of visual art there is a different level of consciousness, a oneness of being, a oneness with the universe. This unity is something I have experienced while sculpting and something to which others have testified as well. For example, Mark Twain liked to draw as well as write his great stories. He once said in uncharacteristic innocence, "I am living a new, exalted life of late. It steepes me in rapture to see a portrait develop and take soul under my hand." (*The Writer's Brush*, Donald Freeman, p. 366) Another writer who also painted was D. H. Lawrence. He said, "All my life, I have from time to time gone back to paint because it gives me a form of delight that words can never give." Art is "a form of religion, minus the Ten Commandments business. It purports being at one with the object." (*ibid.* 230). Being at one with an object is a kind of out-of-body experience that seems to come with the extreme intensity or concentration that an artist experiences. For sculptors, it is sometimes called "thinking like the clay." Kurt Vonnegut presented it this way, "I asked many people more committed to making pictures by hand than I am when their art gave them the most satisfaction. In fact all replied without hesitation that they were at one with the universe when making a picture in perfect solitude." (*ibid.* 390)

Of course, this oneness with the object or the universe, this "sacred rapture," does not happen all of the time while creating art. There are the extensive periods of pounding, shaping, firing clay or slowly carving wood. I do not think I could take too much of

this “rapture.” George Eliot writes in *Middlemarch*, “If we had a keen vision of all that is ordinary in human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow or the squirrel’s heart beat and we should die of that roar which is the other side of silence.”

Nonetheless, such ecstatic experiences in creating art happen often enough to suggest that we are joining our creating to the creator, which is a goal of prayer. Robin Jensen, art historian at Vanderbilt, has written, “Creativity is evidence of grace and God’s self-revelation must be received with pure gratitude, an act of devotion.” (*Visual Revelation, New Conversations: Imagination, Creativity, and Change*, Ed. Wilson Yates, Winter 2004, p. 17-25) This devotion seems to me to be close to prayer.

Art’s power to enchant when being viewed also provides an experience of oneness with the universe and requires some disciplines that are not common. One must put aside analytical thinking and use visual thinking, letting the image speak/reveal its secrets. Jensen gives a helpful comparison. Viewing art is like listening to music. We rarely analyze music. We let it in or we tune it out. Viewing art, like hearing music, is immediate and direct, pre-conscious. Art is received directly into the imagination. Jensen dares to claim that “truth is grasped first in image.” (*ibid.*)

I believe prayer is a way to find oneness with the universe, oneness with God, and it requires we set aside analytical thinking and think in images. We receive the grace of thankfulness, the hope and love promised by our faith if we have such “keen vision.”

My clay relief sculpture entitled, “Expulsion of Hagar” is one of eleven pieces I am commissioned to make for the walls in Drew Theological Seminary in a classroom where



the Hebrew Bible is taught. The sculpture illustrates the sending out of Hagar and Ishmael by Sarah and Abraham into the wilderness with only a bit of bread and a skin of water. The story is a painful one and I eagerly sought some redeeming aspect in it. I found this glimmer of redemption in the passage, "The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on that day. Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian whom she had borne to Abraham playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, 'cast out this slave with her son: for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac'." (Gen. 21:8-10) I put the boys playing in the foreground of my sculpture to communicate some hope in this image. Cruel as the banishment is, God saved Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness when they cried out, when they prayed. God heard and saw their prayer. God is not only *el roi*, the God who sees, as Hagar named God. But God is also *Ishmael*, the God who hears. God hears and sees our cries. God hears and sees our prayers.



## . . . IN ISLAM



**Ferhan Tunagur:** For the past fourteen centuries, Islam has recognized there are as many ways to go to God as there are breaths we take because God is in each breath and every person's relationship with God is unique. There is a verse in the *Qur'an* that essentially says God is beautiful and we are to love

beauty. Muslim artists then and Muslims, in general, try to glorify God and acknowledge God's beauty through the beauty of Islamic architecture, calligraphy, poetry, dance, even the call to prayer itself. One of the most well known artistic expressions of prayer in Islam is the *Sema* Ritual, commonly known as the Whirling Dervishes. The *Sema* is a form of Sufi Dance during which members of the Order of the Whirling Dervishes whirl in religious contemplation. Sufis are dedicated to the teachings of the Prophet in the *Qur'an* that specifically focus on community and self-discipline. The *Sema* ritualizes the Sufi effort to let go of the ego, to become free of the false self in order to reach a mature, all-inclusive love and draw close to Allah.

The *Sema* Ritual traces its origins to the inspiration of Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273) and is influenced by Turkish culture and customs. Rumi is a Sufi mystic and

*Ferhan Tunagur is a professor as well as a Ph.D. student at Rutgers University. He teaches Introduction to Communication and Turkish language classes. He was born and raised in Turkey and now lives between Massachusetts and New Jersey.*

poet whose devotion to God and love for people has inspired millions in both the East and West over many centuries. The first whirling ever done by Rumi is believed to have been a spontaneous act. It is said that he one day passed by his friend's jewelry shop and as he listened to the rhythmic sound of the artisan's hammer pounding the gold to give it shape, he began the turning activity that evolved into the *Sema* Ritual, as we know it today.

Revolution or turning is the basic movement of the universe. From a scientific perspective, everything is composed of revolving electrons, protons and neutrons and life relies on this dynamic interaction of particles. This is true in all of nature, including the human body and soul. The Whirling Dervishes consciously engage in rhythmic turning that unites soul, sound and motion to convey harmony within the universe and direct attention to God as the Center and Source of all that is. Their movement symbolizes the spiritual journey through which the human ego dies, is transcended by turning toward Truth and Love, arrives at Perfection, and returns to earth able to embrace and serve all of creation.

At the beginning of the ritual, the *semazen* folds his arms across his chest, holding the tips of his fingers against his shoulders to represent Elif, the first letter in the Arabic alphabet, communicating that God is first and the one Creator. The *semazen's* camel hair hat symbolizes the tombstone of the ego; his wide, white skirt, the ego's shroud. The *semazen* removes his black cloak to represent rebirth, after which he opens his arms and begins to turn, from right to left, circling with heartfelt devotion, demonstrating God is everywhere, in all directions, in all nations and all of creation. His right arm points toward the sky, palm upturned, to receive God's





beneficence; his left arm, on which he fastens his gaze, is pointed, palm downward, toward the earth, to convey God's graciousness to those willing to receive it. As the Whirling Dervishes move to the simple, rhythmic sounds of the music, they achieve a state of meditation on the love of God that overcomes all outside interference. The Whirling Dervish gives himself as an intermediary. He does not engage in whirling for himself alone. Whatever pain he absorbs in his turning and whatever beauty and harmony he transmits is intended to encourage those who witness the *Sema* to realize their own positions before God, to submit to be purified and exalted in the experience of God's love and to recognize that God is the source of all beauty and harmony.

Many people think of the *Sema* as a performance, like a concert or a show but the *Sema* is actually contemplation in action. The Whirling Dervishes are beautiful in their prayerful, artistic expression of God's beauty. They are not the only expressions of God's beauty, however, because the artistic expression of prayer is not limited to artists or traditional art forms. Whenever any of us tries to align the intentions of our hearts with the ideals of God and do our work with a view toward having it reflect the beauty of God, we are likewise engaged in the artistic expression of prayer.

# PRAYERS



## Invocation for Abrahamic Dialogue

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make the Divine face shine upon us, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.

May the people praise you, O God. May all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the people justly and guide the nations in wisdom. (Psalm 67)

We thank you, O God that we can have our hearts and minds lifted up by different insights into the praise emanating from Abraham.

We pray that you will bless us to be open to new insights and to see things as part of a larger picture.

~ Alfred Krass

*A minister of the United Methodist Church, Rev. Alfred Krass is a graduate of Amherst College and Yale Divinity School. He is the author of five published works and makes his home in Bucks County, PA.*

## St. Therese's Prayer

May today there be peace within.

May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.

May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content knowing you are a child of God. Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love.

It is there for each and every one of us.

*~ St. Therese of Lisieux*

## The Soul Has a Sound of Its Own

Your whole life I have been a bell.  
Always it has been the same:  
I have been waiting to be rung  
so that my sound would be known.

*~ Chet Corey*

*Chet Corey, a frequent writer for SACRED JOURNEY, is a covenant affiliate of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, LaCrosse, WI. Most recently his poems appeared in The Broome Review, Hummingbird, and County Lines.*

## Whirling Dervish Prayer

In the mysterious beginning, amid chaos and darkness  
Your voice sang, Oh God, a song of creation and love.  
You sang and from darkness—light  
Swirling planets, whirling cosmos.  
Your melody of water and sky, sea and land, then fin,  
feather, fur.  
And you knew your song was good.  
You sang again the song of creation  
Then male—female in your image divine and it was all  
pronounced Good.

Help us this night, Oh Glorious Composer of all song  
and music and dance  
to recapture within our spirits  
your original song of creation, goodness, peace and love.

Help us to remember, Oh Merciful One, amid the chaos  
of a world suffering  
and torn by violence our divine origin. Help each of us  
to discover within us  
Your spark of divine creativity and goodness.

Sweep us, Oh Glorious God, into the caravan of love  
and compassion.  
Embrace us in the dance of common humanity.  
Carry us along on the sometimes difficult journey of  
understanding others.

*Rev. Donald Pitches has been pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Carlstadt, NJ for over 20 years. He serves as chaplain for the Carlstadt Fire Department and as president of the Bergen County Council of Churches. He is a member of the Interfaith Dialog Center Planning Committee and is a certified crisis counselor.*



Oh, Most Compassionate One, may we your children  
walk the path worn smooth by prophets and poets,  
singers and workers, dancers and dreamers who follow  
the path of love.

Fill us with intelligence, humility, truth and justice.  
Enable us to transcend our individual ego and arrive at  
that mature place of

Peace

where every girl and boy, woman and man may know at  
last safety, security, freedom and joy.

I ask it in Your Loving Name,

Amen

*~ Donald Pitches*

# The Healing Touch of Tibetan Art



Rabkar Wangchuk is a former Buddhist monk and artist trained in *tangka* painting and other forms of Buddhist art. Traditional *tangkas* are intended to serve as a record of and guide for contemplative experience. Most *tangkas* do not express the personal vision or creativity of the painter, however, Wangchuk intentionally incorporates his personal experiences in his work and wants his paintings to give happiness at first sight, rather than require a lengthy period of meditation to achieve the awakening of a positive mind.

Wangchuk states, “There is great wisdom in the ancient Tibetan notion that healing and spirituality move in tandem and the healing process depends on one’s state of consciousness. My contemporary paintings are intended to evoke healing from within, shifting the viewer’s attention from worldly activity to reality, allowing the flow of nature’s intelligence throughout the body to receive peace, harmony and happiness.” Wangchuk’s paintings convey images of unconditional love and universal compassion—the true source of health and well-being, generation to generation.

Wangchuk has served as lead visual artist for nine years at the Tibetan Institute for Performing Arts in Dharamsala, his birthplace. At His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s Temple, Wangchuk sculpted traditional butter sculptures and three dimensional *mandalas*. He also installed *stupas* at the Norbulingka Institute, Tushita Retreat Center and the Gyuto Monastery. For more information on his teaching and exhibits, please visit [www.wangchukarts.com](http://www.wangchukarts.com)

*Information for this article was adapted from the 2008 catalog, Contemporary Tibetan Art, by Rabkar Wangchuk.*

# Swarasvati

*Swarasvati* (*Ishtadevata*, in Sanskrit) is essentially an Indian goddess. She is the embodiment of virtuous activities of all kinds; cultural, educational, and performing arts; particularly music. She appears as a Buddhist *yidam*. In Tibetan Buddhism a *yidam* is a special deity who helps one recognize through meditation one's own awakened nature. Her mythology includes an important aspect of purification. In many regards *Swarasvati* shares characteristics with White Tara (Goddess of Compassion) who gently protects and brings long life and peace.

According to the Buddhist text expounded by Guru Chandragami, Lhamo Yangchenma is the tangible manifestation of the intangible vowels which have a direct link with the voice and vocal music. The word *Swara* in Sanskrit means tune or melody.





## Passion

In this world, there are many possibilities to achieve. The route to achieving anything depends upon one's motivation and passion. The life we live is very precious because we have intelligence. We possess unimaginable strength to achieve enlightenment in one life and one body. However, obstacles and suffering are part of this achievement and must be faced along the path. A seed placed in soil is destined to come up with results.





## Balance

The human body is controlled by the four natural elements; earth, fire, water and wind. These elements help keep the body in balance. The human body will be affected if one of the elements is disturbed. Therefore, balance is not only important in the physical body and physical world but is also required in all human activities to sustain happiness, harmony and health in the individual and community.

# ILLUMINATIONS



We are all different expressions of one reality, different songs of one singer, different dances of one dancer, different paintings—but the painter is one.

~ Osho

Every artist dips his brush in his own soul and paints his own nature into his pictures.

~ Henry Ward Beecher

If you hear a voice within you say 'you cannot paint,' then by all means paint and that voice will be silenced.

~ Vincent Van Gogh

I'm a child of God who uses the creativity that is God-given to express the depths of the soul.

~ deAnn Roe

The stories in our traditions are lifelines, lifeblood for people. They are a necessity of life and we must tell them. Many cultures and peoples believe that when poets, storytellers and singers (all artists) are lacking in a society, then that people is becoming extinct and beginning to act inhumanly.

~ Megan McKenna

To send light into the darkness of men's hearts - such is the duty of the artist.

~ Robert Schumann

Just as a flower which seems beautiful and has no color but has perfume, so are the fruitless words of the man who speaks them but does them not.

~ *The Dhammapada*

Music and art and poetry attune the soul to God.

~ *Thomas Merton*

Creativity is so much more than art making. It is the tool for navigating through everyday experiences to find the sacred in each God-given moment.

~ *Karla M. KinCannon*

Music is the nutrition of the souls of the servants of the Lord, since, in music, there is the hope of reaching God.

~ *Rumi*

Change is the nursery of music, joy, life and eternity.

~ *John Donne*

Use words, drawing and color to help verbalize and visualize who you are, whose you are, and what is important to you.

~ *Sybil MacBeth*

What was any part but a mold in which to imprison for a moment the shining elusive element which is life itself—life hurrying us and running away, too strong to stop, too sweet to lose.

~ *Willa Cather*

The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.

~ *Rabindranath Tagore*

# Creating Art as an Act of Prayer

*Erika Hastings*



My journey with the topic of creating art as prayer began with a quote that I read from Abdu'l-Bahá, an important figure in the Baha'í Faith, where he describes the act of creating art as worship and prayer. "In this wonderful new age, art is worship. The more thou strivest to perfect it,

the closer wilt thou come to God. What bestowal could be greater than this, that one's art should be even as the act of worshipping the Lord? That is to say, when thy fingers grasp the paint brush, it is as if thou wert at prayer in the Temple." Every time I read this quote, I marvel at its sheer contrast to 20th Century thinking. What does this look like? I thought to myself. What does this feel like? How can I create an act of prayer through my art? These questions burrowed deep into my consciousness.

I went to art school during the postmodern push, when art was not understood as a spiritual or emotional act but rather a primarily conceptual, intellectual pursuit.

*Erika Hastings graduated with a BFA, BEd, and MA. She has a passion for the spiritually transforming power of creativity. Erika's paintings and writings have been published and exhibited internationally. She has worked as an art and foreign language teacher for over a decade in Canada, Mexico, Honduras and Brazil. She currently resides in Vancouver, Canada.*



My process of creating art seemed to differ greatly from what I had been taught, to the extent that I felt like an outsider. It was only as I studied the connection of the spiritual with art that I realized I was not, in fact, an outsider, but one with thousands of artists over the centuries who attested to a deep spiritual pull in creating art. The spiritual actually guided and inspired them.

Using art as an act of prayer makes prayer embodied and active. It recognizes that our every thought and action, if done with spiritual awareness, will have a spiritual effect. In this light, art is the channel through which an artist's prayers are manifested. Art is not prayer because of a particular image or symbol that is used. Art is prayer through a conscious connection to the Creator. As one artist has said, "When I go into my studio, I tell myself it is my temple. This is where I worship. I am always conscious of striving to perfect my art and in the process of this striving, I am coming closer to God." In artists' attempts to perfect their work, they slowly perfect their lives. In the process, they bring their work and their lives one step closer to reflecting the divine.

Creating art as an act of prayer is deeply experiential. Physical sensations can take over the body such as shivers, goose-bumps, tingles, tears or a swelling of emotions, felt in the heart and chest. A sense of time can become distorted as hours feel like minutes. Self-consciousness and fear of failure disappear. Effort, endurance, focus, concentration and patience come easily. There is a release of control and there seems to be no separation between the art and the artist—as if the music is playing itself or the painting is painting itself. This often evokes a feeling of oneness with all creation and a heightened sense of joy, hope and peace.

Several religious and cultural groups have, for centuries, practiced art as a vehicle for communicating with God. The Navajo Native Americans create sandpaintings as a form of ritualistic healing and a cleansing of evil spirits. In fact, the word for art in most Native American languages is synonymous with the word prayer. The Australian Aborigines create sandpaintings and dot paintings in ritual ceremonies to reproduce and pass on sacred knowledge and spiritual power. Tibetan Buddhists also create paintings, sculpture, sandpaintings and music as acts of prayer

whereby they reproduce sacred objects and visions that serve as tools to access emptiness. *Shodo*, the ancient practice of Zen calligraphy which means 'the way of the brush,' is an active meditation through which the artist releases control of the ego, desire, and personal will in order to let the art flow. In Mexico *ex-voto* paintings, meaning dedicated

gifts, are created and offered as protection from illness or thanksgiving for miracles. Within these specific traditions, art was—and still is—used as a direct tool for prayer and spiritual communion with God and the person is the channel through which the divine inspiration flows.

Anything that comes from our ego self, such as fear, depression, lack of confidence or self-criticism has the power to take us away from remembering our Creator and builds a barrier to making art as prayer. In contrast, those things that help us to focus and remember our

spiritual reality enhance the process. Each person treads a different path and will find inspiration and guidance through different means, such as praying and meditating, developing skills to a level of excellence, letting go of expectations and control, creating sacred space, being in nature, following a routine, and exuding confidence and joy.

Experiencing art as an act of prayer changes our perception of the role and function of art. It provides new motivations for creating art and helps us to better understand the creative process and access our own creativity. It gives us courage to shed our fears about creating art and our dependence on approval from others.

Using art as an act of prayer also serves as a catalyst for personal transformation. It provides an opportunity for us to increase our capacity for reflection. It helps us to use personal challenges as triggers for transformation, developing new spiritual qualities. Creating art as prayer helps us to create a connection with God on a regular basis, providing new insights into the role and function of prayer and meditation.

We find the path to God, to our spirit, in different places and in different ways. For many people, this spiritual journey begins and flourishes within the creative process. It will not be for everyone, but hopefully a continued sharing of experiences with art, prayer and the path toward the Creator will offer glimpses into our life experiences and enable us to better understand our spiritual journeys.

# SPIRITUAL PRACTICE



## Chanting OM

“OM” is the most important symbol in Hinduism, representing Brahman, the Unknowable Absolute and Source of all manifest existence. OM (or AUM) is made up of a combination of three Sanskrit letters, aa, au and ma. It is not a word but a sound, an intonation that, like music, transcends physical limitations. OM is a mantra, a combination of sacred syllables whose sound serves as a magnet or lens to focus spiritual energy and begin the transformative process that pulls awareness inward to the depths of the soul where the mystery of divine presence is always shining. OM is considered the root mantra of all mantras, the primordial sound of the universe, the first breath of creation, the pulsation of energy that ensures existence by holding together the atoms of the earth and the heavens. OM is the most often chanted sound among all the sacred sounds on earth.

Chanting OM during meditation allows us to create within ourselves a vibration that is in tune with the vibration of the cosmos and we are able to become one with the Supreme Creative Principle. There is harmony, peace and bliss in the simple chant that is this spiritual practice.

*Information for this article was adapted from the following: [Hindubooks.org](http://Hindubooks.org), [Iloveindia.com](http://Iloveindia.com), and [meditationiseasy.com](http://meditationiseasy.com).*



Sit on the floor in *Sukhasana*, a popular yoga pose, cross-legged, spine erect but not rigid, your weight resting on the sitting bones at the lower edge of your pelvis. Relax. Rest your hands on your knees, palms upward. Gently touch your thumb to the tip of your index finger in a *Gyan Mudra* position. This is intended to guide energy flow to the brain. The thumb symbolizes cosmic consciousness and intuition while the index finger represents individual consciousness and inspiration. When the tips of both fingers meet, the connection is complete—intuition and inspiration form a closed unity.

Close your eyes and concentrate on your breath; allow your breathing to become deep and slow. Inhale. As you exhale, chant the syllable OM. Make each breath last as long as possible. Continue to chant OM at least seven times in succession. If you become aware of thoughts, emotions and physical sensations, simply acknowledge them, and gently return to your OM mantra. Listen to the sound of the Universe. Let OM run through your breath and pervade your life. When you stop chanting, sit for a moment in silence. You will have calmed your mind, settled your thought processes and realized your self in chanting OM.



# Praying Each Day

*Michael Sullivan*



*"Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication."*

*Ephesians 6:18*



Praying each day is a constant challenge. In the hectic pace of our lives, we often forget to try praying regularly. We spend far more than eight hours at work, run home to spend time with family, and exhausted, turn on the television to relieve ourselves of life's constant responsibilities. Even in moments of rest, most of us are multitasking—thinking about work or puzzling over problems and challenges at home. We're addicted to a lifestyle of constant activity and stimulation, so sitting down to a quiet time of listening for God is an almost alien activity.

So when we do get around to praying, we sound more like we're reciting a Christmas list than entering into relationship with God. We take our shopping-mall mentality to God and expect a warehouse portion of blessings in return. It's as if praying at God were just another item on our to-do list, instead of a foundational

*Michael Sullivan, an Episcopal priest, is the rector of a large congregation in Lynchburg, VA. A former attorney, he is a frequent speaker and workshop leader. Excerpted from Windows into the Soul: Art as Spiritual Expression, © 2006 Morehouse Publishing, an imprint of Church Publishing Inc. and used with permission. [www.morehousepublishing.org](http://www.morehousepublishing.org)*

relationship to our identity with our world, our creator, and ourselves. But even in the midst of such empty prayers, we drift away from our petitions and fall back into our busy lives; our petitions before God become a mere reminder of what we have to do tomorrow or next week. "God bless Aunt Sue" becomes "And oh, I have a meeting at noon" or "Shoot, I forgot the paper towels at the store." Most of us can't be still and silent. We can't let our hearts sit and listen for the voice of God. Listening has become impossible as constant activity, and the noise it generates, is our refuge and strength. Turning to silence, and thus to God, has become insufferable.

And yet we know that God speaks in silence. Think of Moses. Think of Samuel. Think of Job. These pillars of the faith came to know the voice of God as one of screaming silence. They took the time to listen intently for the voice of God, knowing full well that God didn't speak in answers but most often in questions. God moved among them silently, quietly leading the way to things unseen, unheard, and unknown. They became charter characters of the faith because they understood how to be still, sit, listen, and discern the path and journey that God blessed.

*Mandalas* provided that key to daily prayer for me. *Mandalas* are an ancient form of soul-searching. Used mostly in the Eastern religions of Hinduism and Buddhism, they are circular representations of the soul's journey in this world. Traditionally, they were created during meditation and functioned as the metaphor for the soul's discovery while contemplating the meaning of life in the present moment. Over time, a complex discipline evolved around these ancient prayer tools. Quadrants were defined as corresponding to certain emotions or responses to events in life. Colors were assigned

significance, as were outer bands and other forms of expression. Words were prohibited in early *mandalas*, but later creators included words written in Sanskrit.

Carl Jung, the great psychiatrist and researcher who was concerned with the connection between the mind and soul, found these circle prayers foundational to the spiritual life. He felt that they were an external portrayal of the inner life, one that could be grasped by others. The art of the *mandala* provided a pathway to the melodies of life—music that might be composed of different notes and rhythms but with a base melody in which we all find a common thread. Because of Jung's writings, especially on how the *mandala* related to dreams and the subconscious mind, these artistic prayers gained universal exposure. Over time they've been transformed into an eccumenical form of prayer shared among the religions of the East and West. No longer limited to meditative traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism, they became a new kind of icon for many in the Christian tradition and provided a window to the soul of the believer.

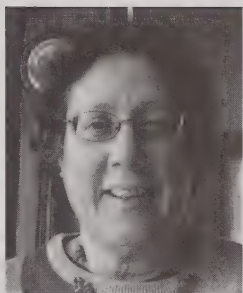


# Stillness Within

Pamela Poe



As a church musician, I have often felt myself come to attention when hearing texts that inspired composers have set to music. Once I've heard a text as part of a hymn, song or choral anthem, it's likely that when I hear it read out loud, the music will well up inside my mind once again.



After thirty-five years of playing music in churches of various denominations, I discovered the Quaker tradition of silent, unprogrammed worship a few years ago. This occurred while I was visiting and taking workshops at Pendle Hill, a Quaker retreat center in Wallingford, Pennsylvania. With all my focus on sacred music, it was a great surprise when I arrived at a place of peace in welcoming silence. Ever since that first meeting, I have listened to this sacred silence, the deep peace found settling into worship, similar to that discovered in contemplative prayer or yoga.

When I visit Quaker meetings, I occasionally introduce myself as an "Episcopalian Quaker." This is because I feel at home in both sacred traditions. There

*Although retired from church music, Pamela Poe still finds it delightful to seek the Divine in the interplay of notes in music, silence in the labyrinth, or jewel tones in stained glass.*

is usually a nod of understanding from at least one person in the room who shares that connection to both.

I am beginning to remember stillness when I need it, during a normal day. Many times I flail around first with confusion, dread, worry, and other thoughts I entertain in times of stress, prior to recalling there is another option. When I remember to consult stillness for direction, guidance or wisdom, then, things begin to move, ideas begin to flow, and progress happens.

Stillness  
helps me  
listen to  
others and  
hear what  
is really  
being said.

Sometimes stillness helps me listen to others, to hear what is really being said. It is often quite different from what I first thought I heard. Sometimes, I can then understand what someone is really struggling with. I may discover there is a small step I can take to help them and I know that just listening can in itself be a powerful gift.

Whenever things are going badly, I often see later it was based on a lack of stillness. Whether anxiety, worry, excessive chatter, or simply making too much of an effort get in the way, stillness can right the balance. Oddly enough, I have at times found stillness in the noisiest of surroundings: airports, trains, restaurants, even traffic jams. Stillness is always there, waiting to be tapped, if I can remember to stop and wait for it.

I have long enjoyed a vocal song by Ralph Vaughan Williams that begins with the words, "Silence within." I like to think that in setting this text, Williams was affirming that musicians must use both sound and

silence to punctuate the rhythms of music. Without silence, notes cannot be clearly heard. As an organist, I have often savored the pause after playing a chord, when I lift my hands and hear the music echoe from the rafters. For organists, half the music comes from the instrument, and half is supplied by the room beyond. Whenever the music dies away, a new gift appears: my latest friend, the stillness within.

## A REFLECTION



### God's Musical Instruments

*Colette Hanlon*

One Sunday morning I was listening to beautiful classical music and recalled the words of Robert Morneau, Auxiliary Bishop of Green Bay, Wisconsin: "Our calling is to be glad instruments of God's love in an imperfect world." What a lovely and challenging thought!

Have you ever considered yourself as a musical instrument? Might you be a delicate sounding flute or piccolo, a deeply resonant French horn, a flowingly poignant violin, a vibrant member of the percussion—a drum, cymbal or xylophone? What is the gift you alone are invited by God to add to the world's music?

It is so easy to look at others and wonder why they insist on "blowing their own horn" or are so sweet that they are not taken seriously. Perhaps if each of us reflected quietly on the gift for harmony—or discord—that is given to us, we might be more compassionate and understanding of others with different gifts. All are needed for God's symphony to continue. And yes, sometimes the dis-harmony will be much more evident than the harmony. That doesn't mean we must destroy the instruments offering the "sour note." Instead, discord is

*Colette Hanlon, a member of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, is presently Spiritual Care Coordinator at Providence Center, Lenox, MA. Her main interest is the integration of spirituality in everyday life.*





a challenge from the Conductor to work harder to blend our instrumental gifts into better unity.

This is, indeed, an imperfect world and we are not always using our “instruments” to foster a creative musical composition. Part of doing so is listening deeply to the sound and resonance of the other instruments and then learning to enter into the musical celebration with our own gifts. How the Divine Conductor must rejoice in the harmony of all of our diverse gifts used creatively!

# Joy in the Dance

June Keener Wink



When the word “dance” presents itself, it evokes a special kind of feeling. For me, as a teacher of body movement, that feeling is joy. It lights us up, gives us a little nudge. Since I became interested in movement and dance I have noticed how often dance is used to name books, articles and even conferences. Eagerly and excitedly I would grab these writings only to find out when looking closer that dance was used as a metaphor, as a way of capturing our imagination, to draw us in. Almost never was anything written about the dance itself. Nor was dancing actually featured. I felt betrayed. For me, the word is not a head trip or a word loosely thrown around, but a sacred, meaningful and joyful act to be participated in.

Recently I was in a worship service where the choir director called out for the congregation to dance in the aisles while the choir sang gustily. Responding to her call, I discovered that I was the only person moving up and down those wide aisles. I was not surprised. I yearned for others to break away from their confining pews, to join me

*As a movement therapist and teacher, June Keener Wink offers a unique approach to the integration of body, mind and spirit. She leads groups in movement and art activities. This article first appeared in The Living Pulpit, and is used with permission.*

in the ecstatic expression of joy through movement which was being proclaimed through song. I yearned to invite them to let go of the negative voices holding them back. I too have had to struggle against those voices, which were sometimes overwhelming and other times sneakily telling me, "Stop making a fool of yourself," "Don't be so brazen," "Don't hog attention," "What will other people think?" To those projections I added, "Who do you think you are? You embarrass me." On and on those voices nagged. Shifting down into my real self, I would get in touch with the inner dancer inspired by God. Only then could I let go and freely swirl with the universe.

After a recent Sunday morning service, a friend conveyed to me how "up" she felt. "I'm on top of the world this morning," she said. She went on to relate that her aliveness was a result of attending a dance performance at a local college the night before. "Whew," I thought, "why, oh why can't we integrate that joy in our so-called worship, whether on Sunday or in Bible study or a good business meeting?" What scares us so about being movable bodies? Perhaps it is precisely because we are split, because we have not understood the incarnation, because we do not consider our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit.

In the workshops my husband Walter Wink and I lead, my task for over the past sixteen years has been to enable participants to be more spontaneous in their bodies. I invite them literally to love their own bodyselves as part of their whole Self. When we dig into our tradition, we find a gold mine in the simple but beautiful Hebrew word, *nephesh*. It means body, soul, spirit—all one. It can refer to the total self or only a part, but knows nothing of the splitness of our modern way of separating body from soul or spirit.

The Hebrews had no separate word for soul or body. They did not see them split. The trouble came in translating Hebrew into Greek and English, which had no equivalent for *nephesh*. The translators in most cases gave preference to the word “soul.”

Just imagine what a difference it would have made throughout Christian history if we had a word like *nephesh*! Perhaps our rejected and despised bodies would not have become so alienated. Perhaps we could accept that we are made in the image of God. Instead of using body, mind or soul, then, I prefer to speak of ourselves as *nepheshes*.

I have repeatedly seen miracles take place as I gently open a way for participants to get in touch with their inner dancer. I assume that everyone, yes, everyone has an inner dancer, even though it may be stronger in some than in others. I assume that age, shape and gender is no obstacle. I invite those who are blind, those who are in wheelchairs, or who have other physical disabilities, to explore within their own range, to find out what is possible.

Together we learn a vocabulary that enables us to move spontaneously and creatively. We are then freed to move our prayers, our joys, our grieving through the dance. Why not let our praise flow from our bodies in our worship services? Why don't we quite literally leap for joy? Was it not the babe in Elizabeth's womb that leapt for joy when Mary greeted her in ancient times?

Don't we, after all, have a moving, active, dancing, joyful God?



# P O E T R Y



## Basso Profundo

If you don't stop listening, you can hear  
the bottom of the silence, feel it

beneath the soles of your feet.

The baseline, from which all music springs:

the dance of particles in the sunlight, the counter-  
point of objects and their shadows. A wave

too large for the small chambers of our ear  
to hold: rocking, rocking.

~ *Meredith Davies Hadaway*

*Meredith Davies Hadaway is a performing harpist who also serves as chief marketing officer for Washington College in Chestertown, MD. She is author of Fishing Secretes of the Dead (Word Press).*

## Pondering

Tell me the color of mercy.  
What is the sound of belief?  
Does justice have an aroma?  
Is there a rhythm to grief?

Can rainbows be tapped by a paint brush?  
Does the inanimate breathe?  
Do winds blow into symphonies?  
Do oceans feel longing to heave?

Can I touch the spirit of yearning?  
Must I breathe the scent of despair?  
Tell me the color of dreaming.  
From whence flows the heartbeat of care?

Is hope the blue of tomorrow . . .  
legato the calming of strife?  
Is giving the seeding of wonder?  
Is love the cadence of life?

Lean into my singing heart;  
let me impart, enfold  
the hue,  
the beat,  
the scent,  
the seat,  
of soul.

~ Jody Adams

*Jody Adams is a retired child protective social worker who helped form a thriving poet's society at Christ's Church Frederica, on Georgia's St. Simons Island. Jody was a poetry contest winner in 1944 and has been waxing lyrical ever since.*



# ENDPIECE



## Just Being at the Piano

*Mildred Chase*

Just being at the piano—egoless—is to reach the place where the only thing that exists is the sound and the moving toward the sound. The music on the page that was outside of you is now within you, and moves through you; you are a channel for the music, and play from the center of your being. Everything that you have consciously learned, all of your knowledge emanates from within you. There is a sense of oneness in which the heart of the musician and the heart of the composer meet, in which there is no room for self-conscious thought. You are one with yourself and the act, and feel as if playing has already happened and you are effortlessly releasing it. The music is in your hands, in the air, in the room, the music is everywhere, and the whole universe is contained in the experience of playing.

*Excerpted from 365 Nirvana Here & Now: Living Every Moment in Enlightenment, a collection of daily meditations edited by Josh Baran and used with permission.*



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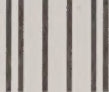
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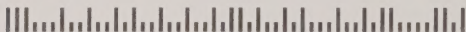
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